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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State

EO 11652: XGDS DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/NR

TAGS: PINS REVIEWED BY *CAF* DATE *SEP 27 11 55 AM 1973*
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

FROM : Amembassy Guatemala

DATE: 14 Sep 73

SUBJECT: INTERNAL SECURITY: Monthly Report of Incidents
August 1973

REF :

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS
OCT 2 1973

SUMMARY: The month's total of 65 press-reported incidents of a political nature was relatively high for this year and about on a par with the 1972 monthly average (63), but the August total included 6 victims who were found in August but had been killed in previous months. The Government was blamed in the press for 12 of the incidents

This month's high kidnapping total (24) included three municipal employees, two of whom had been active in the FURD. A murdered medical student and teacher was viewed by his colleagues as a martyr to the cause of striking teachers, who joined the university students in a three-day strike to protest alleged Government complicity in the death. The press reported that election-related harassment by Government officials had caused 15 families to flee from Alta Verapaz to Belize. Three apparently non-political incidents aroused considerable press attention: the kidnapping and murder of a naturalized American businessman, the machine-gun killing of a reputed underworld figure and the arrest of the widow of Oliverio Castaneda on extortion charges.

1. Statistics: The August total of 65 press-reported incidents of a probably political nature nearly equalled last month's total (66) and was above both the January-July monthly average (53) and the 1972 average (63). However, the month's count was somewhat misleading in that six

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"incidents" involved badly decomposed bodies which were found in a clandestine graveyard in August but obviously had been buried in previous months. Statistics included 24 kidnappings, the highest since January (also 24), and 33 assassinations, in five of which there was reported evidence of torture. Victims this month included 12 small-scale farmers and peasants, 3 municipal employees, 3 market vendors, 2 students, 2 work inspectors, a union leader and a private policeman. The press and various political and student groups attributed to Government security forces 12 of the incidents or 18% -- an unusually high percentage of attributed incidents. None of the incidents this month were attributed to the Far Left -- also a rarity. The remainder of the incidents were not readily attributable.

II. High Rate of Kidnappings: The August kidnapping total (24) has been surpassed only once during the past year and a half. Among the victims were several political activists. The case which has aroused greatest public attention has been that of Mrs. Guadalupe Porras Quinonez, administrator of a capital market, who was kidnapped August 23 by unidentified armed assailants. A rent collector at the same market, Carlos Humberto Quinonez, was detained together with Mrs. Porras, and another municipal employee, Eduardo Cruz Garcia, was kidnapped the day before at his home in the port of San Jose. Cruz' wife claimed that the San Jose police chief was among the four armed assailants. Guatemala City Mayor Colom Argueta sent letters to Minister of Government Roberto Herrera Ibarguen demanding that the authorities guarantee the life and well-being of the three victims. Herrera angrily rejected Colom's implication that the police were involved in the kidnappings. During an aborted demonstration August 29 in front of the Presidential Palace a group of market stall leasees threatened to close all city markets unless Porras and Quinonez were released within a week. The threat has yet to be carried out.

At least two of the victims were involved with the FURD. Mrs. Porras had been politically active during the Arevalo regime and according to the press lately was collecting signatures for the FURD. Colom told us that Cruz had been one of his most effective FURD organizers on the South Coast.

Comment:

End Comment.

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The University Students Association claimed six other kidnapping victims were being held at the Government's "Regional Police headquarters," which the AEU branded as "a subsidiary of the CIA." The Ministry of Government issued a statement explaining that the headquarters in question housed the Presidential telecommunications center, denying any prisoners were held there, and asserting that no "subsidiary agency of the CIA" functions in Guatemala.

III. Student Death Angers Colleagues: Jorge Luis Rodriguez Bracamonte, a 20-year old medical student and teacher found murdered August 5, was viewed by his colleagues as a martyr to the cause of striking teachers. The mother of the victim claimed he was kidnapped August 3 by four heavily armed men riding in a Bronco jeep. His body was found in another part of the city two days later and identified by a fellow student, who claimed the initial medical examination found Rodriguez had been tortured, knifed and shot. The press and students immediately charged that Rodriguez had been killed by the police. The University Students Association and the National Teachers Movement declared a halt to all activities during three days of mourning (August 6-8). On August 8 the Government presented four "common criminals" who had "confessed" complicity in the murder, but two of the suspects denied their guilt during their court appearance. The AEU announced it would take on the defense of the four men, whose arrest served only to cover up the guilt of "the President, Minister of Government and Director of Police."

IV. Another "Clandestine Graveyard": Heavy rains revealed another "clandestine cemetery" in the capital August 12. During a week of digging the police and firemen uncovered six nude bodies and the possible remains of others buried in the bottom of a ravine. The press reported the bodies appeared to have been shot about 40-60 days ago. The police re-interred the bodies, claiming decomposition made identification impossible. The press speculated the dead were murdered for political reasons, but the Government suggested they had been victims of a landslide while working.

V. Report of Pre-Election Harassment: One newspaper reported that 15 families from Cahabon, Alta Verapaz had emigrated to Belize in order to flee violent harassment by the local military commissioner, a Government Coalition deputy candidate who sought to intimidate the populace into supporting him in the 1974 election.

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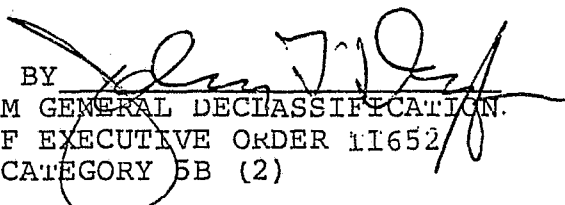
Comment: Last month there were two similar reports of Government officials attempting to force inscription into the MLN in Santa Rosa and harassing an opposition recruiter in Chiquimula. Real and fabricated stories of political strong-arming always have characterized Guatemalan pre-election periods and are likely to increase during the coming months. End Comment.

VI. Spectacular Non-Political Violence: During the month several incidents of apparently non-political violence attracted considerable press attention. Martin Kolton, a naturalized American citizen and local automobile importer of Polish-Jewish origin, was kidnapped August 23 and found dead two days later. A leader of the local Jewish community told us Kolton was kidnapped by common criminals who killed him despite ransom payment when they detected police surveillance. The press speculated Kolton had been killed by the Black September Organization, but the police vehemently denied that any Palestinian guerillas are present in Guatemala. At the beginning of September the newspapers reported the police had detained four suspects, including one of Jewish origin.

In addition, physical-culturist Mariano Cordoner Gutierrez, "Mr. Guatemala" of 1961, was machine-gunned to death August 27 in what the police claimed was an underworld vendetta. Cordoner was reported involved in narcotics and liquor trafficking and smuggling of Guatemalans into the United States.

Finally, police arrested Alba Violeta Castaneda Flores (widow of Oliverio Castaneda, a notorious rightwing gunman who was assassinated in June of 1971) August 29 on charges of plotting to kidnap her husband's former secretary. Violeta allegedly had threatened "reprisals" against the secretary unless she returned \$200,000 Oliverio reportedly had left in his office. Police also booked Violeta on illegal possession of a weapon, a 38 revolver which she said she kept as "a remembrance of my husband, who always carried it." Mrs. Castaneda was released from prison two days later with the extortion charges dropped because of "insufficient evidence," but was required to pay a small fine for illegal possession of a weapon.

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